

IN THE DRAWINGS:

Please amend FIG. 2 as shown, namely to include item (20). Please replace FIGS. 2 and 3 with the Replacement Sheet attached herein.

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed September 29, 2005 has been reviewed and carefully considered.

Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's indication that claims 7-8 and 16-17 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The Examiner's reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks. Claims 1-5, 7-14 and 16-21 are pending in the present application. Claims 6 and 15 have been cancelled without prejudice. Claims 1 and 12 have been amended. No new matter has been introduced.

DRAWINGS AND SPECIFICATION

The drawings were objected to as not showing every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Applicant submits herewith a Replacement Sheet in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.121(d) to show the optional/alternate feature of the tube being curved. Namely, FIG. 2 has been amended to show an optional curved tube 20. The specification has been amended accordingly to recite the alternate embodiment of a curved tube 20. Thus, withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

§102 REJECTIONS

Claims 1-6, 9, 12-15, 18 and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,918,936 to Murphy (hereinafter Murphy '936). In addition, claims 1, 2, 4-5, 9-10, 12-14, 18-19 and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,113,188 to Stewart et al. (hereinafter Stewart). Claims 1, 2, 11, 12-14, 20 and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,375,910 to Murphy (Murphy '910).

Applicant has amended claims 1 and 12 to recite, *inter alia*:

“...the inflatable bag comprising a tubular main body which is sealed at each end by separately formed end panels attached to said main body so as to form an inflation chamber, the material of the main body, at each said end, forming with said end panels an outwardly projecting flange by means of which the opposing ends of the bag are securely fastened to the rigid base and rigid seat, respectively,....”

Applicant respectfully asserts that neither Murphy '936, Stewart or Murphy '910 disclose or suggest at least an inflatable bag comprising a tubular main body which is sealed at each end by separately formed end panels attached to said main body so as to form an inflation chamber, the material of the main body, at each said end, forming with said end

panels an outwardly projecting flange by means of which the opposing ends of the bag are securely fastened to the rigid base and rigid seat, essentially as claimed in claims 1 and 12.

Applicant notes that claims 6 and 15, which essentially recite the above amended features, were rejected in view of Murphy '936. However, a careful review of Murphy '936 reveals that while it discloses an inflation bag, such inflation bag is of simple unitary construction, having ends which are folded over so as to enable attachment to a base and seating panel. This construction has a significant disadvantage however, in that due to the nature of adhesion of the folded-over end sections of the bag, inflation will tend to urge the inflation bag away from its end panels (e.g., end plates 21), thus resulting in a system that is prone to the bag becoming detached from the base and/or the seating panel due to its reliance on the strength of the adhesive. Furthermore, the folding-over of the ends will lead to a perceived, if not actual, instability during inflation of the bag.

In stark contrast, the system of the present invention provides an arrangement in which flanges are formed between the main body of the bag and the end panels and project radially outward from the inflation bag. The flanges are used to attach the bag to the base and the lifting panel accordingly. For example, penetrating fastening means can then be used to attach the bag to the base/lifting panels without the risk of leakage of the inflation chamber, since such fastening means do not actually extend through the walls of the inflation chamber themselves, and are not in fluid communication with the inflation chamber. Further, this arrangement advantageously provides a particularly secure system for attaching the inflation bag to hinged panels in a manner which eliminates any stressing of the coupling while simultaneously ensuring that the integrity of the inflation chamber of the bag is maintained. Such an arrangement is certainly not suggested by the prior art;

neither are the issues which the present invention seeks to overcome and the advantages afforded thereby.

Turning now to Murphy '910, that reference discloses an inflation bag of unitary construction which includes internal fastening means to enable their attachment to the base and seat panels. (E.g., see Col. 3, lines 13-15, reciting *inter alia*, "...inflatable member 42 having its top and bottom sides or walls 43 and 44 suitably secured as by as appropriate adhesive or other fastening means, i.e., snaps or zippers, to said adjacent facing surfaces..."). Not only is there no teaching or suggestion of any type of flange or its equivalent, in the arrangement disclosed by Murphy '910, the reliance on and use of such internal fastening means makes the assembly much more complicated and increases the risk of inflation bag leakage due to penetration of the bag at a multitude of possible points.

Stewart is alleged by the Examiner as disclosing wherein "...the locating means comprising a flange is item 40." Applicant respectfully disagrees. Col. 5, lines 2-4 in Stewart plainly recite that item (40) instead merely comprises a carrying handle. The carrying handle 40 in Stewart does not operate as, nor is the equivalent of, an outwardly projecting flange by means of which opposing ends of an inflatable bag are securely fastened to a rigid base and rigid seat, essentially as claimed in claims 1 and 12.

Accordingly, claims 1 and 12 are asserted to be patentable and nonobvious in view of Murphy '936, Stewart or Murphy '910 for at least the reasons stated above. Claims 2-5 and 7-11 depend from and include all the limitations of claim 1. Claims 13-14 and 16-21 depend from and include all the limitations of claim 12. As such, the dependent claims are

believed to be allowable for at least the reasons given above for claims 1 and 12. Claims 6 and 15 have been cancelled without prejudice.

Accordingly, withdrawal of all the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) is respectfully requested.

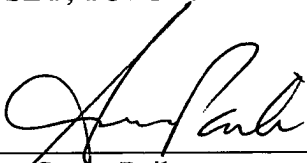
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-5, 7-14 and 16-21 are patentable and nonobvious over the cited references. Consequently, the Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections and allowance of the application. Such early and favorable consideration by the Examiner is respectfully urged. Should the Examiner believe that any further telephone interviews may facilitate resolution of any remaining matters, it is requested that the Examiner contact Applicant's undersigned attorney.

It is believed that no additional fees or charges are currently due. However, in the event that any additional fees or charges are required at this time in connection with the application, they may be charged to Applicant's representative's Deposit Account No. 50-1433.

Respectfully submitted,
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